DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 369 043 CS 011 661

AUTHOR Corridon, L. Beverly
TITLE Improving Third-Grade Students' Attitudes to Reading through the Use of Recreational Reading Activities.
PUB DATE 94
NOTE 62p.; Ed.D. Practicum, Nova University.
PUB TYPE Dissertations/Theses - Practicum Papers (043) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Elementary School Students; Grade 3; Instructional Effectiveness; *Parent Participation; Primary Education; *Reading Attitudes; *Reading Improvement; *Recreational Reading; *Student Attitudes
IDENTIFIERS Reading Motivation

ABSTRACT

The goal of a practicum was to improve students' attitudes towards reading. Subjects, 35 third graders, were representative of the community's social composition. Activities encouraged increased reading time in and out of the classroom. Parents were asked to encourage their children to read and to participate by reading with them, to them, or discussing what was read. Pre- and post-surveys were administered to all student participants. Strategies were used to help students overcome language and decoding difficulties. Parents were encouraged to become involved in the improvement process. Participants in the practicum increased their reading time in the classroom as well as at home. A positive change of attitude was observed in many participants, though some maintained the opinion that reading is a boring activity. (Contains 18 references and two tables of data; sign-in sheets, survey instruments, and a reading log are attached.) (Author/RS)

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ED 369 043

Improving Third-Grade Students' Attitudes to Reading Through the Use of Recreational Reading Activities

by

L. Beverly Corridon

Cluster 49

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A Practicum I Report Presented to the
Ed. D. Program in Child and Youth Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

CS011661

NOVA UNIVERSITY

1994

PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

The practicum took place as described.

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This practicum report was submitted by L. Beverly Corridon under the direction of the adviser listed below. It was submitted to the Ed. D. Program in Child and Youth Studies and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova University.

Approved:

Feb. 18, 1994
Date of Final Approval of Report

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the members of my family who were very supportive during the practicum process. Special thanks to my husband Garvin Corridon, also to Eyka Luby, Joyce Nelson, Tracy Nessl, and Isadora Monroe who all listened attentively, and gave words of encouragement when the final goal seemed invisible.

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ABSTRACT

Improving Third Grade Students' Attitude to Reading Through the use of Recreational Reading Activities. Corridon, L. Beverly, 1994: Practicum Report, Nova University, Ed. D. Program in Child and Youth Studies. Primary/Elementary/ Reading/Reading Attitudes/Recreational Reading/Parent Involvement

The goal of this practicum was to improve students' attitudeS towards reading. Activities were done to encourage increased reading time in and out of the classroom. Parents were asked to encourage their children to read and to participate by reading with them, to them, or discussing what was read.

The writer developed a survey to assess students' attitudes to reading; administered pre- and post-surveys to all student participants; used strategies to help students overcome language and decoding difficulties; involved parents in the improvement process.

The participants in the practicum increased their reading time in the classroom as well as at home. A positive change of attitude was observed in many participants, though some maintained the opinion that reading is a boring activity.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of Community

Working in the south-eastern region of the United States exposes the writer to a community in which the majority of the students are English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). The school is housed on 11 acres within a densely populated community. The population of the community has changed drastically within the past 10 years and continues to do so. It is a highly residential area with residents ranging from lower to middle income. While some people own their own homes, a large number live in rental communities. Across the street from the elementary school is a middle school.

Writer's Work Setting and Role

Built to service 955 students, the elementary school now has an enrollment of 2,290 students. Of these, students 5% are white, less than 1% black, non-Hispanic, and 94% Hispanic, and other races.

In order to facilitate the needs of the group in a building that was built to service approximately 1,000

students, many of the students are transported daily to other schools. Two neighboring elementary schools provide instruction for 310 students. In order to maintain class size, thirty-six portables have been added to the facility. The school houses pre-kindergarten to fourth grade. There are 13 fourth grade classes, 23 third grade classes, 20 second grade classes, 23 first grade classes, 19 kindergarten classes and only one pre-kindergarten class.

The administrative staff consists of the principal and three assistant principals. Ninety-nine classroom teachers, four exceptional education (ESE) teachers, two media specialists, two guidance counsellors, four secretaries, ten custodians and other service workers with 21 chapter-one teachers and 16 paraprofessionals work together to meet the needs of these 1,980 students who stay at the home site.

Special programs are designed to meet the needs of these students. These programs include Chapter 1, Exceptional Student Education (ESE), speech and a bi-lingual program. The bi-lingual program is divided into four sections. Limited English proficient (LEP) students are serviced by teachers who teach the content curriculum in the home language (CCHL). The ESOL program provides all instruction using special strategies, to (LEP) students. Spanish-SL instructors teach Spanish for

English speakers and Spanish-S teaches Spanish to speakers of the language.

A media center with 13,171 books is available to all students. One hundred and fifty computers are used for instructional purposes. A cheerleading squad currently participates in competition, though there are no sports teams in the school. An Enviro-cop club was recently started. This encourages students who participate to be aware of the environmental problems that the community experiences. Other clubs include Computer, Math, Science and Reading.

The students participating in this practicum are third graders. The class population is representative of the community's social composition. This average size class consists of thirty-five students. There are 22 boys and 13 girls. They range in age from eight to ten years. Only three have been retained prior to third grade. Mainly because of their lack of English proficiency, the mean stanines for reading of the majority of Spanish speakers are below that of the average English speakers'. Most of the students come from single-parent homes. For many students in either type of family structure their parents are non-English speakers.

The writer is currently a third grade language arts teacher who teaches Language Arts to two third grade

classes. The pilot program in which the writer is participating focuses on immersing students in an enriched, integrated curriculum. She has taught for the past nine years in both the elementary and middle school settings. She has completed a Bachelor of Science degree in English and a Master of Science degree in Education and additional training to meet the needs of ESOL students.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

Reading is one of the most important skills that any student will learn in their academic career. For many, learning to read is a task that is very easily accomplished. Yet for others it seems almost impossible. Some students enjoy the activity, while others seem to think that it is not a very important part of their daily activities. For many students, reading is something to be done only when completing an assignment for school. There seems to be a gradual disenchantment with reading.

Students at the primary level of education are at a stage where they are learning the basic skills that will be necessary as they continue with their formal education. As understanding increases, they become more interested in what is being taught, and more actively involved in the learning process. From their initial encounter with pre-school throughout their higher education, students will be increasingly more responsible for their academic success. Many of the study habits

begun at this level could become patterns which may continue to the end of their formal education. Since reading is an important educational activity, doing so for pleasure should be practiced regularly. This would not only give students an opportunity to develop reading skills, but also encourage habitual reading.

For many students reading is a subject and not a part of their daily life. Within the confines of a classroom, reading is the scheduled activity with the teacher. In many instances it is conducted by a teacher who initiates the activity, determines what will be read, and for what duration. With the exception of the 20 to 30 minute time allowances for visiting the media center, students do very little recreational reading. This short time barely allows students time to browse the shelves and find a book of interest. After the language arts period is over, reading is no longer given top priority in the students' lives. For many of them reading is now over until homework assignments are done, or until the next scheduled language arts period. Additionally, reading is not a part of their daily routine at home.

In short the problem is that students lack the desire to read. They seem to get no pleasure from the activity and they do not perceive it as enjoyable.

Problem Documentation

For two consecutive weeks the writer observed the students' pattern of usage of the learning centers in the classroom. To document the existence of the problem the writer placed a chart (see Appendix A) at each of the five centers. The students were required to put a check mark next to their numbers every time they went to that center. This would show that they had used that center on a given date and also keep a record of the time spent there. Highlighted dates were days on which the centers were used for a full language arts period.

Centers were used after completion of assignments. In order to use a center a student must have had no less than ten minutes left for a given assignment. The student then chose one of the five centers at which to work. One day per week students used the centers for the entire two hour language arts period. Every 20 minutes there was an optional rotation to facilitate the students who wanted to change and to ensure that each student had an opportunity to enjoy more than one center. The writer or the assistant in the room kept time since students sometimes became so involved in the activities that they lost track of the time.

Compilation of the data showed that the reading center was the least frequently used. The computer and the listening stations were the ones that were most frequently visited. Students used these centers almost three times as much as the reading center. While the computer center provided opportunities for reading, the listening center was set up so that participating students could choose to read or not read while listening. The game center and the arts and crafts centers were also used more frequently than the reading center.

Table 1

Number of Student Visits to Centers Before Implementation

Week	Reading	Computer	Arts/Crafts	Listening	Games
A	23	55	31	72	28
B	21	60	29	66	33

When center day usage was compared with free time usage, the pattern was similar with the exception of the arts and crafts area which showed more usage than usual. The listening station and the computer center were the two centers that were most frequently used.

Table 2

Comparison of Number of Visits to Centers During Free Time (FT) and Center Day (CD)

	Reading	Computer	Arts/Crafts	Listening	Games
FT	20	65	24	70	31
CD	24	50	36	68	30

A parental survey (see Appendix B) was designed to assess the students' reading patterns at home. The surveys indicated that 22 students spent more than three hours daily viewing television. Outside play for 12 students was not permitted. For seven of them time spent outside was an hour to an hour and a half. Thirty-three parents reported that 45 minutes was the most time spent completing homework assignments. Ten indicated that they helped their children with assignments for less than 30 minutes weekly. Only three read to their children or with them on a regular basis.

Another instrument (see Appendix C) was developed by the writer to assess students' views on reading. All 35 surveys were returned. Of these 31 indicated that reading was boring. Only five responded that they would

rather read than do any other activity. Of these five only two actually spend more than 15 minutes reading non-assigned materials at home. Twenty-one students viewed reading as something to be done only when completing assignments. The preferred activities for all but five, students were playing electronic games, or viewing television.

Causative Analysis

There are varied reasons for students lack of interest in recreational reading. In the writer's current setting students were unmotivated to do any supplementary reading. There seemed to be a general lack of interest in books as a source of entertainment. The technological advances to which children are exposed, offer them a variety of entertainment activities. They have become accustomed to the resolution of all conflicts in a very short period of time. Conflicts that arise are usually resolved in two to three hours in a movie. In a video game the resolution happens in just a few minutes or sometimes even seconds. The students have grown accustomed to instant or almost instant gratification.

Reading any well developed story requires a longer period of time to move from introduction to conclusion. To an avid reader this time is enjoyable and well spent.

To one who dislikes reading or is having problems with reading this time can be tiresome and more like torture. Eldredge (1990) points out that a major characteristic of poor readers is that they are unable to connect the words and sentences that are read, with enough clarity to foster comprehension. The primary focus becomes decoding individual words or phrases instead of the whole sentence. For a student who is not fond of reading the activity becomes frustrating.

Fredericks (1982) shows that external factors like classroom organization, instructional programs, and content all influence students' attitudes to reading. If student interest in what they are learning is not present, or if they feel like they lack input to the activity, they do not willingly participate. With the current curriculum, there is very little opportunity for students to actually practice their reading skills. Lack of connection to the reading experience because of faulty curriculum or instruction can also have a negative influence on students' attitudes to reading.

Most of the students are ESOL. Their oral use of English does not necessarily coincide with their ability to read the language. While reading in English is a barrier to some, the students lack the motivation to read in any language. They read at lower than the grade appropriate level in both Spanish and English. Many

continue to be embarrassed and are unwilling to read lower level books during free reading time. For some this is the only time that books that they can actually read are available. They are frustrated because of the low levels of success when reading.

The majority of students first learned to speak Spanish. They do not read on a third grade level in Spanish. Varying levels of linguistic instruction take place simultaneously. Spanish is on a pre-primer to beginning first grade level, CCHL instruction is on a third grade level while in Language Arts ESOL techniques are being utilized to compensate for possible deficiencies in English. There is little integration of the three areas with regard to curriculum continuity or as far as incorporating reading in the daily activities. For the ESOL student this fragmentation only leads to further difficulties. Miramontes (1990) explains that the bilingual environment is very complex and many of the attributes that should be thought of when planning a suitable instructional program are ignored.

Among the many struggles of the ESOL students in third grade is the fact that they have only been exposed to English for three to four years. Barnitz (1985) states that in order to read in a second language children do not have to be totally proficient in it. He states that as the language is purposefully used and

students make sense out of it, proficiency will be achieved.

Another possible reason for the students' lack of interest in reading is the lack of parental participation and lack of modelling of reading in the home. Many of their parents speak little English and are therefore unable to help with language arts assignments. According to the results of the survey, parents do not spend a great amount of time reading to or with their children. It is not an activity that is done as a family, neither are the parents avid readers. Barnitz (1985) states that ESOL readers who are unfamiliar with the conventions of storytelling will have problems with reading.

For many of the parents, reading is done by the child at school or when doing homework. According to Dupart (1985), students are readily deterred from recreational reading if they see it as an extension of school work. Dupart also states that focusing on the student's inabilities and need for improvement in reading, also causes the student to have negative views about reading.

Relationship of the Problem to Literature

Children master oral language without formal education but fail to master written language after many

years of formal instruction. It is either the methods by which they are taught, the books that are used or other factors in their environment that gradually lead them to become disinterested in reading.

When children begin to read and write they seem interested and spontaneous about these activities in spite of their inabilities. Emergent readers look at their own print (non-traditional) and are able to read it aloud. They do this with pride. They are reading and the activity is being enjoyed. Strickland and Morrow (1988) state that reading and writing are developed concurrently with oral language. Each of these activities supports the other as the student continues to develop reading skills. This changes as the student becomes less able to read, resulting in his or her eventual loss of interest in reading as a hobby.

Larrick (1987) reviewed two typical beginning reading instruction books. She found the language in the basal reader to be trivialized and unable to interest a 5- or 6-year-old. The wording was unnatural and the related activities consisted of several drill and practice routines to be done with the students. The teachers' manual gave detailed instructions as to how to complete these activities.

The author compared this with another literature based series and noted that the author used simple words

to create a story with a beginning, a middle, and an end. She also indicated that the rhythmic patterns of the story were similar to daily speech. Careful reviews showed that most text pre-primers and primers did not have good literature bases. If students become disenchanted with books at the pre-primer level, how can they be expected to be avid readers in later years?

Students enjoy doing activities at which they are successful. Just as they become increasingly proficient at sports through practice, it is important that they practice reading in order to become proficient. Thurlow, Graden, Ysseldyke, and Algozzine (1984) cited Jesse Jackson's statement, "Johnny can't read because Johnny doesn't practice reading." Thurlow et al. completed a study in which they observed the reading time of 27 second-grade students. Their main purpose was to document and analyze ways in which the students and teachers used the reading time.

The results of the study showed that of the 120 minutes scheduled for reading, 30 minutes were used for transitions and other activities, and 81 minutes were dedicated to reading instruction. Of the 81 minutes an average, of eight minutes were used for silent reading and about two minutes in oral reading. When these averages were calculated to show reading time for the school year, the results were that only 21 hours of

silent reading and 5 hours of reading aloud would be done. This of course indicates that there is very little practice time for actual reading in the classroom.

Technology has exposed the modern child to a wide variety of materials via computers and or television. According to Larrick (1987), 6- to 11-years-old children watch about 23 hours of television weekly. With the addition of electronic entertainment to the child's toy chest, time spent in front of a television has dramatically increased. Morrow and Weinstein (1986) state that there has been a decrease of more than 10% in pleasure reading among readers under 21. How can children be expected to move from high-tech games at which they are successful, to reading as a hobby, if there are continuous negative experiences with the latter?

Sutton (1989) states that children experience difficulties in reading for many reasons. Limited English Proficient (LEP) and ESOL readers seem to have an even greater problem when learning to read in English. Collier (1987) states that it sometimes takes five to seven years for LEP students to gain the necessary command of the second language for them to be successful in reading or other academic areas.

Strickland and Morrow (1990) support the hypothesis that children who read early or show interest in reading

usually come from homes in which they were read to frequently. Teale (1981) explains that exposure to good books helps to develop children's vocabulary and sense of story structure. This later helps the child learn to read. Barnitz (1985) also supports this position. Parents modelling reading could only be a positive influence to children. Conversely, failure to do so could lead to a child developing the viewpoint that reading is not an important activity.

As students fail to develop the skills necessary to read successfully, they become increasingly frustrated with the activity and eventually lose interest in it. Reading and writing are developed as they are purposefully practiced. It seems only logical that frustration would begin if reading ability is decreased or development lags as the child continues through school. Students should be given every opportunity to become involved in reading and practice so that they would eventually become successful.

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Goals and Expectations

The following goals and outcomes were projected for this practicum. The goal is to increase third grade students' recreational reading time. Additionally, the students would develop a more positive attitude towards reading for pleasure.

Expected Outcomes

After 12 weeks of practicum implementation, the writer hoped to achieve the following outcomes:

(1) 25 of the 35 participating students will choose to read non-assigned materials at least 15 minutes per day, for four or more days per week as indicated by their reading logs.

(2) The amount of time spent at the reading/library center in the classroom will be doubled for no less than 20 of the participating students as indicated by the sign in sheets.

(3) 20 of the students will have change of attitude about reading as indicated by the results of the post-implementation survey. They would no longer perceive

reading as a boring activity, but would change to a more positive view of it as a recreational activity.

Measurement of Outcomes

In order to assess the students' use of free time away from the classroom, parents were asked to complete a written survey before and after implementation of the practicum (see Appendix B). A comparison of the data was done to reveal any changes that might have occurred.

Parents were also asked to initial a reading log (see Appendix D). This log served to record the total amount of time that students spent reading weekly, and the number of days that they actually read.

A chart was prepared to compare pre and post-implementation usage patterns of the centers in the classroom. Information gathered from the sign in sheets (see Appendix A) was compiled to aide in the summarization of the data. If students are involved at the reading center the writer assumed that some level of reading was occurring. An increase in usage of the reading center by twenty or more students would have indicated that more free time in the classroom was spent doing leisure reading.

Students were asked to complete a survey about their views on reading (see Appendix C). The written survey was completed by all students in the writer's home-room

language arts class. Stickers were given for the speedy return of the surveys. The survey was repeated at the midpoint and at the end of the implementation period.

Information gathered from these surveys was summarized, and charted for easy comparison. This showed the number of students whose views were or were not altered as a result of the practicum experience.

While the writer did not foresee any problems during implementation, the possibility still did exist that something could have gone contrary to plans. The writer kept a daily log during the implementation period. Students were also be asked to use their journals to reflect on activities. Student journals and the writer's log were used to help the writer remember specific events. These documents were of assistance when preparing the report.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion of Solutions

Students in third grade do not perceive reading as an interesting activity. They prefer spending leisure time doing other activities that are of more interest to them. They spend little time reading for pleasure.

Strickland and Morrow (1990), state that continued exposure to books helps in the development of children's vocabulary and gives them a sense of story structure, which assists in the process of learning to read. Kramer (1989) introduced chapter books into his fourth, fifth, and sixth grade classrooms for a two week period. Basal readers were set aside so that the students could use other available literature. Six books were chosen. There were many group discussions to help alleviate the students' fears and to clear up any problems they were having. After completion of a few chapters other whole-group sessions were done to discuss the literature.

Results showed that over sixty-six percent of the students preferred reading novels rather than stories in

the basal readers. There was a higher level of group discussions, additional silent reading increased by 79%. Vocabulary learning also increased by 72%. An overall improvement in students reading abilities was indicated.

Recreational reading has been a part of the plans for many schools. Wepner and Caccavale (1991) implemented Project CAPER (Children And Parents Enjoy Reading) at six New Jersey schools. This project included members of the school staff, parents, and students, working together to increase recreational reading among students. The purpose of the project was to find out if student attitudes to reading would improve when parents participated in recreational reading activities.

The project was completed with volunteer parent/ student groups who read together at home and kept records of the amount of time that was actually spent reading. Monthly records were returned to school and data was compiled. Pre- and post-surveys were completed by the students to measure their attitudes towards reading.

The results of the program showed that students' attitude towards reading were positively changed. They perceived it to be a fun activity. According to the authors, a group of second-grade, Chapter I students no longer qualified for services by the end of the implementation of Project CAPER. Regardless of the

school, the project was found to be a booster for parent/child relationships and positively influenced students' reading attitudes.

Journal writing offers another way for students to express their thoughts about books as well as synthesize what they have read. Wollman-Bonilla (1989) reviewed the reading response journals of three students. The author found that writing a response to literature that was read, gave the students an opportunity to express ideas without thought of being right or wrong. They could express their thoughts and justify their ideas more concisely. Furthermore, students became more confident and highly motivated to read. They became more interested in pleasure reading.

Showing the importance of being able to read became a stepping stone to improve third grade students' reading habits in Houston, Texas, when Dorotik and Betzold (1992) teamed up with the Houston READ Commission to complete a project. The READ Commission is an organization that promotes adult literacy skills. Thirteen adults in the program were matched with 36 third-grade students. These adults read only on a third-grade level. After completing each of four books, third graders and adults were asked to respond to questions. They were taught letter writing skills and exchanged views by mail. Later the books were used to expand the areas of math and

science. Poetry writing was the last part of the activities. After completion of all the writing activities, a whole group activity was done, where adults and students met and shared ideas. Using the San Diego County Inventory of Reading Attitudes Test, the authors found that there was an increased awareness of reading. Students no longer thought of themselves as being bad readers. Twenty-three percent more of the students preferred to read during free time.

Children tend to emulate the behaviors of their peers. Hilbert (1992) claims that as students see the success rates among their peers, their own involvement with literature grows. Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) offers students a scheduled, uninterrupted time to read materials of their choice. According to the author, good management of the time and careful planning of activities can be a powerful tool used to boost students' desire to read. Some of the suggested activities were book re-writes, student led group discussions, finger puppetry, and artistic summaries.

When rewriting books, students would be asked to re-create their favorites. This could be a group or individual activity. Frequent student/teacher conferences will help students to stay focused. Sharing with the whole group is a major part of all activities. Completed books will then be added to the class library.

Puppet making involved creating a main character from a three inch square piece of poster board, decorated with other materials. A character description, plot, setting and other memorable events are prepared on index card. A map of the setting was also prepared. The puppets and written materials aided in students' presentations to the group.

The author observed that the students became more involved in this activity since it was considered fun. At the same time it offered an opportunity for them to connect language arts to social studies. It also offered an opportunity to see literature as interconnected parts and not as fragmented pieces. The plot, character, and setting were all used to support the main character's development.

Another alternate activity was presented for use by the students having difficulties with any of the above ideas. Students are allowed to create an artistic summary. In this project each student chooses one scene from the book, draws it in detail, then adds one or two lines to describe it. When all are collected they could be bound and used as part of the class library.

Kramer (1989) presented the idea of novel reading in the classroom. Allowing students to read novels for a two or three week period could possibly motivate students to read a complete book. They read basal reader stories

in which six to seven pages is the longest story. This idea would probably work with students who have some interest in reading but lack motivation to go to the library or lack other reading resources.

Wepner and Caccavale (1991) presented the idea of including parental involvement in working with unmotivated readers. They indicated that involving the parents promotes reading success and could also help improve students' chances of being successful in elementary school.

In the writer's setting parental involvement is extremely low. Generally only about ten percent of parents voluntarily participate in their children's school activities. If parents were convinced that this activity would help to improve their students academic performance, there was a possibility that they would willingly participate.

Journal writing as presented by Wollman-Bonilla (1989) could be added as part of the writer's language arts activities. With two-hour blocks of time scheduled for each language arts group, the writer uses a daily ten minute period for journal writing. The choice to respond to literature can now be added to the list of journal choices.

The writer also incorporates sustained silent reading (SSR) in the language arts activities. What

Hilbert (1992) suggests is to add follow-up activities to the silent reading. Many of these activities would work well in the writer's current situation. It is clear from the author's presentation that students need to have an active role in the learning process. When the students perceive their learning activities as enjoyable, they will be more motivated. Connecting the content areas to language arts is a part of the whole language process. In the writer's current setting, whole language is the teaching method of choice.

Using the methods presented by the author would offer many opportunities to reach children who are unmotivated or who lack some of the writing or language skills necessary to complete a standard book report. Cooperative learning skills can also be improved when the students use these activities. The artistic summary would be especially useful with LEP and ESOL students. They can work with students who are more proficient in English. By so doing they will be learning valuable language skills from their peers.

One major concern would be working with the available resources. The writer would need to have more reading materials for class use. With the use of current materials and books borrowed from the local library, the writer believes that there would be a variety of materials readily available for students to read. The

writer would also seek PTA funding to buy stickers and other rewards to be used during implementation.

Description of Selected Solution

After reviewing the literature the writer decided to use a combination of strategies to help reluctant readers gain a more positive view of recreational readings. Fredericks (1982) showed that poor instructional organization could have a negative influence on students' attitude to reading. Special care was given to ensure high interest activities were available for use. Since most of the students are speakers of other languages, and often demonstrate frustration when completing written activities, the writer focused on improving reading attitudes and increasing recreational reading time.

Chapter books were read to the class as part of daily instruction. This helped students understand how authors gradually build to a climax, and exposed them to examples of literature other than the condensed versions included in the basal reader.

As documented in Thurlow et al. (1984) reading time is sometimes limited to only a few minutes in a given language arts period. The writer incorporated a SSR time during each language arts period. This guaranteed all

students at least 10 minutes daily when silent reading was done. By the end of the implementation period the time was increased to 30 minutes.

The literature supports the idea that parental involvement gives encouragement to students who may otherwise not be interested in a given activity. After communicating this with parents, they were asked to informally discuss any read material with their children. This part of the implementation could not be strictly monitored. The writer depended on the parents willingness to continue working with their children throughout the entire practicum process. Parents were asked to document the time that their children spent reading by signing a record sheet (Appendix D). They were also asked to spend some time reading with or to the children. Students also read to their parents, or siblings, and kept a record of the actual time spent reading. If no reading was done that was also indicated.

For some students inability to decode leads to frustration when reading. As part of the ongoing language arts instruction, small group discussions were conducted. The class was divided into four groups, each was assigned a meeting day. During these group meetings the writer offered additional help with decoding skills. Students were given time to share and discuss any materials that was read. Reading logs were collected and

reviewed. Rewards were given for completed logs, improvement in reading time, or as motivation.

As a culminating activity the students were asked to choose their favorite character and make a puppet. They then used the puppet as part of a class puppet show where characters from all the favorite books met and talked to each other about their life in the stories.

Report of Action Taken

Week One

Two weeks prior to implementation the writer conducted a survey on students' usage of the centers in the classroom. The writer spent the first week getting parents and students prepared for implementation of the practicum. A letter was sent home seeking parental permission for students to participate. A pre-implementation parent survey was also sent home. These were completed and returned to school. Parents were asked to attend a meeting during which specifics of the implementation plan were discussed. Student surveys were also completed and the results compiled.

The writer prepared all charts, and reading logs at this time. Student folders were also prepared to keep materials accumulated by each student during the practicum process. They were given to the students when the parental surveys were returned. Students then

decorated them. Students were oriented to the activities that followed during the next twelve weeks, in order to motivate those who were not be interested. Group assignments were done that students had an opportunity to familiarize themselves with other members. To alleviate grade anxiety, they were told that the activities were non-graded.

Week Two

The meeting with the participating parents was held. At this time purpose of the program was discussed and any misunderstandings were clarified. The group meeting was conducted in both Spanish and English since many of the parents are not bilingual.

The implementation process began in the classroom. SSR time was increased to ten minutes. Each group met weekly to discuss progress, to distribute rewards and to encourage them to continue.

Week Three

Students were asked to choose the first book that was read to the class. They chose Free Willy. The writer agreed to read this since many of the students had seen the movie and were enthusiastic about listening to an oral reading. It seemed to be of high interest to all the groups. Daily readings were done until the first book was completed. By the end of the implementation period four more books were read. They were Sarah Plain and

Tall, Bridge to Terabithia, Julie of the Wolves, and Yen-Shen: A Cinderella Story from China. During small group discussions material from the books were discussed.

Week Four

SSR time was increased by five minutes. Students were introduced to ways of sharing the information they had read with friends. This included reading with a classmate (buddy reading), letter writing, poster making, book jacket designing, book talks, pretending to be main characters, and making mobiles about the books. After student interests were heightened, more time was added for sharing about books the students had read.

Week Five

Students were introduced to taped choral readings of stories. Each group was allowed to tape themselves. During discussions students critiqued tapes of themselves. Second and third tapings were done and compared to the first.

Week Six

A second survey of students' attitude to reading was completed. Results were compiled. A mid-point progress report was prepared and submitted to the writer's advisor. SSR time was increased to 20 minutes.

Week Seven

Students were asked to write a letter to their parents telling them how the reading activities were

progressing. Letter writing, as part of the language arts program, was incorporated at this point to make the activity more meaningful.

The 45 minute time period before dismissal on Wednesday afternoons was used to make up any incomplete assignments or activities. An unplanned idea was implemented this week. A kindergarten teacher was having difficulties locating volunteers to read to students in the class and asked if students from the writer's class could do some reading during free time. The writer agreed to send ten students each Wednesday to read to the kindergarten class. A different group went weekly.

Week Eight

Another choral reading tape was completed. This time students chose what they read as a group. After having some practice time they taped themselves. The four tapes would be played back to the whole group after which progress and other aspects of the activity were discussed. Students shared ideas on how to make reading as a group more effective.

Week Nine

Because the class had already progressed to twenty minutes of SSR daily, no change in the time was made during the ninth week of implementation. Small group meetings were continued and students continuously shared

ideas and interesting information about which they had read.

Week Ten

At this point students were asked to select their favorite character. The culminating activity was discussed. They were told that the activity would be a mini-puppet show by each group. They were given the opportunity to decide the format of the performance. The main idea was to allow the puppets to share information about themselves with the class.

Students were shown several methods of puppet making and began work on a puppet of their choice. Again they were allowed to use one of the methods shown by the writer or use a style of their own. Students had two weeks to complete their puppets at home or at school.

Week Eleven

The final choral reading tape was done. The students then compared it to their first choral reading tape during the small group sessions. SSR time was increased to a total of 30 minutes. Students started work on the mural in the classroom. A theme for the mural was chosen. The mural served as a backdrop for the puppet show. The script for the puppet show was written.

Week Twelve

Students practiced for the puppet show. Props were prepared and a final rehearsal was done. Post-

implementation surveys were completed by parents and students. On the final Thursday of the implementation period parents were invited to the classroom to see the students' puppet show. Students and parents were given certificates of participation. On Friday the performance was repeated for two fourth grade classes during language arts.

CHAPTER V

Results, Discussion, and Recommendations

For many students at the writer's work setting, reading is done in the classroom, when doing homework assignments, or other school related activities. Students do little recreational reading and consider the activity to be boring and tedious.

In order to motivate the students to do recreational reading, the writer recruited the parents' help to monitor and participate in their children's reading improvement plan. Parents signed students' logs to confirm how much recreational reading was done by the students. The parents were also asked to read to their children, to read with their children, or to have the children read to them regularly.

In the classroom students' SSR was 10 minutes daily. This time was gradually increased to 30 minutes by the end of the implementation period. During this time the students read materials of their choice quietly and uninterrupted.

Small group instruction and discussions were done daily to assist students who were having difficulties decoding or interpreting material. During this time students also shared with the group any interesting information that they had found out when reading. The writer was also able to get feedback from students and monitor individual progress. At this time rewards were also distributed.

The writer incorporated a series of activities that were done by the students to help make sharing less difficult. This included buddy reading, letter writing, poster making, book jacket designing, book talks, pretending to be main characters, and making book mobiles. For buddy reading a high level reader and a low level ready worked together. This allowed for assistance with difficult vocabulary.

A major part of the reporting process was to advertise a book that was read. Posters were made to help advertise the book. The posters were designed by the group pretending to market the book of their choice. Students considered a target group and worked on strategies that would attract that particular group. For younger readers the posters were more colorful, with a little writing while posters for older readers had more written information. New book jackets were designed as a part of the marketing strategy. Students' conducted book

talks to help convince others to read the particular book being advertised. Other students chose to make mobiles as part of their advertising plan.

Groups were given opportunities to read aloud and taped their readings periodically. They were able to compare tapes and discuss them in order to make any adjustments that the group deemed necessary.

A puppet show was the final activity. Students chose a favorite character from the books they had read and created a puppet. The characters were part of a book-talk show, during which they told a little about themselves and what they did in their book.

Results

Thirty-five students participated in this practicum, which was implemented for a twelve week period during 1993. The first expected outcome was that 25 of the 35 students would choose to read non-assigned materials for at least 15 minutes daily for four or more days per week. A pre-implementation survey showed that the majority of students only read assigned materials. Thirty of the 35 students read non-assigned materials for more than 15 minutes daily for the entire length of the implementation period. Of these, ten students read for 30 minutes per day during the last three weeks, while only four read for periods longer than 30 minutes. The remaining five

students read less than 15 minutes daily for the duration of the practicum with a gradual decrease to no reading by the last two weeks.

The second expected outcome was that no less than 20 students would double the time spent at the reading/ library center in the classroom. Fifteen students doubled their pre-implementation time by the ninth week, and a total of 20 by the twelfth week. Though the remaining students didn't double their time, all students did show an increase in usage of the reading/library center.

The third expected outcome was that 20 of the 35 students would have a positive change of attitude towards recreational reading. The pre-implementation survey showed that 31 students viewed reading as a boring activity. After implementation only 12 students considered reading to be exciting. Of these only 10 said they would read rather than do any other activity. Another six students indicated that it was not as boring as before implementation. Television viewing and electronic games were still listed as the preferred free time activity.

Discussion

The writer believes that the students' interest in reading was heightened as a result of the practicum

experience. The first and second outcomes were met. Students did spend increased amounts of time reading alone, or with parents and other relatives. Library/ reading center usage in the classroom was increased.

The children of parents who became involved and read with them or joined library groups were the ones who achieved the third outcome. Wepner and Caccavale (1991) implemented project CAPER (Children And Parents Enjoy Reading). In their project the students with the most parental involvement also showed the most significant improvements . The writer believes that the time students spent reading with parents, offered the parents an opportunity to see what their children were interested in reading. It gave some of the parents an opportunity to become involved in their children's homework activities as well, since some of their homework assignments were discussed. Many students reflected that they enjoyed helping their parents read in English. The writer believes that this enhanced their self-esteem and gave them an opportunity to enjoy some quiet time with their parents.

While 20 participants doubled the time spent at the library/reading center, all 35 showed an increase in time spent there. The outcome was met. Students who prior to implementation went to this center only once per week increased their usage to as many as four times per week.

The increased usage was shown mainly among the lower readers. They seemed less afraid or embarrassed to read the lower level books that were available. Some students attempted to read the higher level books. Reading with a peer (buddy reading) helped them to overcome some of the decoding difficulties.

Based on the increased usage of the reading/ library center and the major increase in non-assigned reading the writer expected that all 35 students would have had a positive change of attitude towards reading for pleasure. Eighteen students had a positive change of attitude, while another 17 still maintained that it was boring. The increase of reading time at home or in class had little effect on some students' attitude towards the activity. Many incentives were given to encourage continued student participation. The writer believes that this could have influenced the students' decision to participate. Based on the results of the post-implementation survey the writer believes that an intrinsic change did not occur with all students. For some it may have been a change in order to receive the rewards.

Two unexpected activities evolved during the practicum. During one small group discussion the students asked if they could read to younger students on Wednesdays before dismissal. It was arranged with a

kindergarten teacher. This was supposed to be done on one occasion only. Instead it became a weekly activity. For 30 minutes every Wednesday after the seventh week of implementation, five students went to the Kindergarten class and read to them in small groups. Again the writer observed that it was the lower level readers who were most interested in doing this activity.

Because of an assembly during the sixth week of implementation, one group was unable to complete an activity and the writer sought parental permission to have those students come early that Wednesday to complete the activity. All the parents gave permission and the group met for 30 minutes prior to the beginning of regular instruction. The activity was completed and the extra time before school began was used for informal discussion regarding the other practicum activities. Later that week another group wanted to know when it would be their turn to come early. An additional activity then begun. Each group was given an assigned date when they could come in at 7:45 a.m. to meet and discuss their books. By the final week of implementation this had become a study group where students tutored each other. Not all students participated but those who did found it to be a rewarding experience.

Though all the outcomes were not successfully met, the writer believes that most of the students became

enthusiastic about learning. There was a marked improvement of attendance. Students who were habitually late arrived on time. For some students reading journals aloud was stressful. By the end of the implementation period all but four students seemed to have less problems speaking in front of the class. If this high interest in being at school could be maintained for the rest of elementary school and even junior high, it is quite possible that students would no longer need as many special services as they now do. Students would also become more successful in other subject areas and become eager and interested in learning.

Recommendations

The writer would recommend that the practicum be implemented by the grade level during the next school year. If it is successful in the following year the second, third, and fourth grades school could implement it while the other grade levels can use parts of it to enhance their language arts classes. Another area on the post-implementation student survey can be added to give students an opportunity to give individual written feed back about the experience.

Dissemination

The writer plans to continue usage of the practicum ideas in the current language arts classes. During the third and fourth grading period the second language arts class would be using the practicum strategies. After final approval of the report is received, the writer plans to meet with the supervising administrator to discuss wide range use of the practicum. It would be suggested that the initial usage be for the third grade. Full school implementation is the eventual goal. A copy of the practicum would be placed in the school's media center as a reference tool for participating teachers. The writer would consider other forms of publication.

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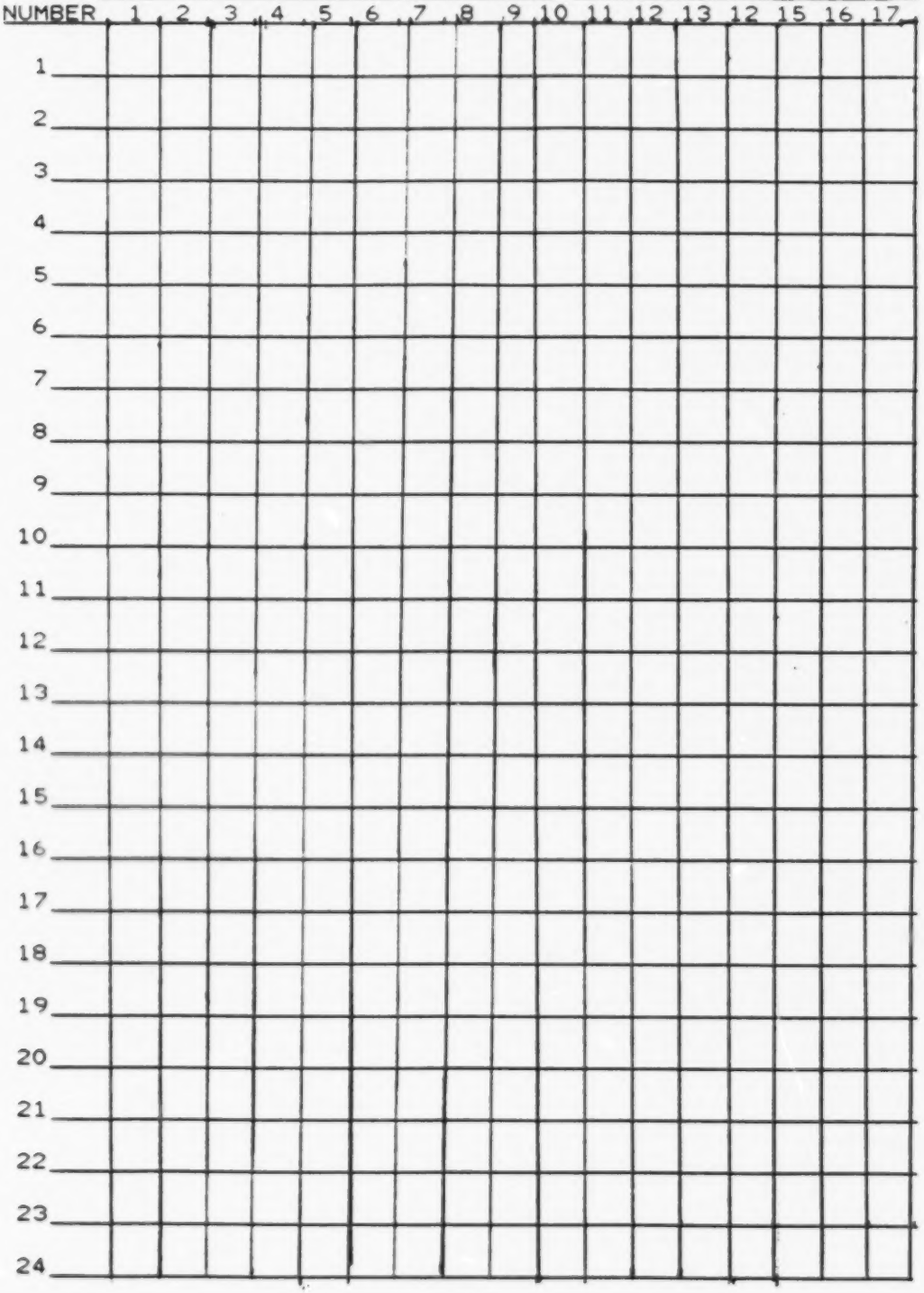
APPENDIX A

SIGN IN SHEETS FOR CENTERS

CENTER _____ MONTH _____

STUDENT _____ DATE _____



List is expanded to include all dates and student numbers.

APPENDIX B

PARENTAL SURVEY

Which of the following does your child enjoy doing the most?
A. Watching T.V.
B. Playing video games
C. Reading
D. Playing outside

On an average how much time does your child spend watching television daily?
A. Less than one hour
B. One to two hours
C. Two to three hours
D. More than three hours

If the amount of time is not listed please indicate the average amount of time. _____hours

Is your child permitted to play outside of the home after school?
A. Yes B. No

How much time does your child spend playing?
A. Less than one hour
B. One to two hours
C. Two to three hours
D. More than three hours

Does your child do homework assignments every day?
A. Yes B. No

How much time does your child spend on homework daily?
A. Thirty minutes or less
B. Thirty minutes to one hour
C. One to two hours
D. More than two hours

If the amount of time is not listed please indicate the average daily time that your child spends on homework assignments. _____minutes

Do you assist your child with assignments?
A. Yes B. No

How much time do you spend helping your child with assignments weekly?
About _____ minutes

Do you read with your child regularly (more than three times a week) ?
A. Yes B. No

How much time do you spend reading daily?
About _____ minutes

Do you think your child enjoys reading?
A. Yes B. No

Do you think your child enjoys being read to?
A. Yes B. No

What do you think is your child's favorite free-time activity? _____

APPENDIX C

STUDENT SURVEY

PLEASE READ EACH QUESTION AND CIRCLE THE BEST ANSWER.

1. Which word best describes reading?
   A. Fun B. Boring C. Exciting D. Dull

2. If you could only do one of the following which would it be?
   A. Read B. Watch T.V. C. Video games D. Play outside

3. How much time do you spend on homework every day?
   A. Fifteen minutes C. One hour
   B. Thirty minutes D. More than one hour

4. How much time do you spend reading other books every day? (comic books, story books, magazines)
   A. Fifteen minutes C. One hour
   B. Thirty minutes D. More than one hour

5. Why do students read?
   A. To do homework and classwork
   B. For fun
   C. To find out information
   D. To read something for someone else

6. If you won twenty dollars which would you buy?
   A. Books C. Video games
   B. Toys D. _____

7. For your birthday which would you prefer to get?
   A. Books C. Video game
   B. Toys D. _____

8. Can you learn anything by reading a book?
   A. Yes B. No

9. Reading is only for doing school work.
   A. Yes B. No

10. Reading is the most exciting thing I could do when I have free time.
    A. Yes B. No

11. Watching television or playing a video game is the most exciting thing I could do when I have free time.
    A. Yes B. No

12. The thing that I enjoy doing the best is
    _____

APPENDIX D

STUDENT READING LOG

1. Write your name and Monday's date
2. Have a parent initial the amount of time spent reading daily.
3. Put a check mark if you shared with a parent or other person in the home.
4. Put an X if you did not share.

WEEKLY READING LOG

NAME:_____WEEK OF_____

	# OF MINUTES	INITIALS	MATERIAL WAS SHARED
MON.	_____	_____	_____
TUE.	_____	_____	_____
WED.	_____	_____	_____
THU.	_____	_____	_____
FRI.	_____	_____	_____
SAT.	_____	_____	_____
SUN.	_____	_____	_____

TOTAL MINUTES SPENT READING FOR THE WEEK _____